

Gardening with Chuck Programs for March 4 - 10, 2019

Early Gardening? Maybe Not This Year

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Two years ago in early March people were planting peas and getting ready to plant potatoes. First of all, the ground needs to be thawed before you can plant anything. And it helps if there isn't snow and ice on it at the time. As humans we make plans, and mother nature doesn't care. Peas, often the earliest thing we plant, and I have my seed sitting at home in the packet, can be planted well into April, and good thing this year. But I would still try to get them in as soon as the ground is dry enough and warm enough. Many of our other early season crops like the cole crops, potatoes, radishes and turnips can be planted about a week or so after peas. But you first have to have the ground worked which is why fall tillage is often a good idea for at least the early garden. What's warm enough, stay tuned tomorrow. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Soil Temperatures

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Yesterday I was talking about getting peas planted once the soil dries out enough and warms up enough. How warm does the soil need to be? For peas that's about 40 degrees soil temperature measured at mid morning. To be precise, take the temperature at 2.5 inches between 10 and 11 in the morning. Right now, those temperatures are in that 30 to 32 degree range. And they aren't going to increase very fast until we get the snow and ice off our garden spots and start drying that soil out a little bit. Some plants, like lettuce, parsnips and spinach can sprout at soil temperatures as low as 35 degrees. But sprouting and growth is slow and they honestly will do much better once we get soil temperatures up to 45 degrees. But don't worry if you get them in the ground a little early, the seed will rarely actually rot. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Bagworms

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. We've had a cold winter, there's no doubt about that and there's even a few more weeks before spring officially gets here. The long range forecast also indicates that spring is going to take its own sweet time in arriving. It's been a long cold winter and I've already had questions from homeowners wanting to know if this will reduce bagworm numbers this summer. Quite simply, no. Bagworms currently exist only as eggs safely ensconced in those little bags on the junipers or whatever their host tree was. They won't start hatching until the very end of May at which time, primarily in June, they will be easy to control. In the meantime, the only possible control will be picking the bags off the trees and burning them, or sealing them up in a plastic bag and tossing in the trash. That's the only option. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Pruning Deciduous Shrubs

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. As I was talking yesterday, it's been a long winter. At times I've felt the weatherman in Groundhog Day. It just keeps going and going and every day is the same. But spring is coming. Gardeners and homeowners alike are going to finally have a really nice Saturday or maybe just a longer nice evening with the pending switch to daylight savings time. And that spring fever itch will set in. They have to do something, anything, out in the yard. And their eyes will fall on the shrubbery that is singing a siren's call of "I need to be pruned." STOP. Slap yourself and snap out of it. If that shrub is one of the several species that blooms in the spring, lilac, forsythia, spirea do not prune it. You will be pruning off a majority of the flower buds. Go and cut on the Euonymous or boxwood but nothing that blooms! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Evergreen Issues

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I was at an agent training last week and we were talking about evergreens in Kansas. We have one native evergreen, the red cedar. No native pines, no native spruce or firs, only the cedar. None, and I mean NONE of the evergreens, even the cedars, are without issues. The number one challenge to growing evergreens in Kansas, is the weather. We are in the transition zone for many plants and evergreens are no different. We have record droughts, record heat, record cold, even record wet. Each and every one of those extremes are going to take out some evergreen. If you want to plant evergreens, call me up and let's talk. There are some that I will simply say no to. But most of them I will probably say yes, but we aware that... Go ahead and try different evergreens, but do so well informed of the challenges. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.